Atlantic Premiers' Joint Position on Improving Health Care

The Atlantic premiers reaffirm the call of all premiers made at the 2002 Halifax Annual Premiers' Conference for a new federal provincial funding partnership to revitalize and sustain health care for all Canadians.

The federal government must fund the *Canada Health Act* if it wants to defend it.

It is imperative that the federal government work in partnership with the provinces and territories to ensure a sustainable health system in the future.

1. Fiscal arrangements

Additional and stable federal funding is required to sustain all aspects of the health care system. Any new federal dollars must ensure adequate support of ongoing core health services before funding any programs that do not currently exist.

Given interprovincial fiscal disparities, as well as fiscal challenges facing several provinces, it would be inappropriate for the federal government to propose utilizing a cost-sharing model to induce provinces to expand health services.

Continue to support the consensus position of premiers as stated at the APC 2001 and confirmed at subsequent meetings of premiers:

"A call on the Prime Minister to join them in following through on his commitment to achieve adequate and sustainable fiscal arrangements over the immediate to medium term, including:

- *immediate removal of the Equalization ceiling;*
- *immediate work on the development of a strengthened and fairer Equalization program formula, including as one possible alternative, a ten-province standard that recognizes the volatility around resource revenues, and comprehensive revenue coverage;*
- *restoration of the federal health funding through the CHST to at least 18% and introduction of an appropriate escalator; and*
- *work on other measures, including tax point transfers as one possible alternative to the current CHST transfer."*

2. **Role of the Private Sector**

The Atlantic premiers call on the federal and provincial governments to work together to encourage more effective delivery of publicly funded health care services that are consistent with the five principles of the *Canada Health Act* and allow innovation from both the private and public sectors.

3. **Canada Health Act**

The Atlantic premiers support the *Canada Health Act* and its renewal to reflect the changing circumstances of health care.

If there is an expansion of services covered by the *Canada Health Act*, then it must be supported by adequate and sustainable federal funding.

4. **Health Human Resources**

The Atlantic premiers support the consensus of all premiers for enhanced planning and interprovincial cooperation in training and recruiting health professionals to ensure that there is an adequate supply in all provinces and territories.

5. **IT – Health infostructure**

Support the need for targeted federal funding to sustain existing levels of IT investments and the development of health infostructure.

6. **Funding for primary care reform**

Federal funding is required to allow provinces to accelerate their efforts in reforming the delivery of primary care to achieve service improvements and efficiencies, while accommodating unique conditions in each province and territory.

7. **Expanded Coverage**

Additional funds should focus first on core services already provided. Coverage of additional health services must come with a guarantee that they will be supported with adequate and sustainable federal funding.

Areas where expansion can be explored include pharmacare, and home care.

8. Accountability and Partnership

The Atlantic premiers accepted the accountabilities for health care funding that were agreed to at the First Ministers' meeting in September 2000. These included applying for support from the primary health care fund for specific projects, spending funds from the medical equipment fund on medical equipment, and reporting on health care indicators.

The Atlantic premiers agree that accountability for health delivery and health spending is important but believe that accountability lies first and foremost with being accountable to the public, not the federal government.

9. National Wellness Strategy

The Atlantic premiers call for a national wellness strategy to be developed with the cooperation of all provinces and territories.